

INDIANA RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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“Partners Working for Rural Indiana”



INDIANA RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL 2004 ANNUAL REPORT

Work Plan Component: Rural Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

Goal: The goal of the REDS work plan component will be to develop and distribute a combination of grant and loan programs (totaling \$7.2 million) that will strengthen and enhance the resiliency and sustainability of Indiana's rural communities.

Outcome 1. Fund rural development initiatives that utilize a collaborative regional (multi-county) approach.

IRDC created the Rural Regional Partnership Program to support new and/or existing regional rural development organizations with grant dollars totaling \$1.8 million. The grant proposals were due on August 31, 2004. IRDC has received twenty (20) collaborative project applications from throughout Indiana requesting over \$4.8 million. Types of projects ranged from education and telecommunications to the arts, and agriculture as well as traditional economic development projects in leadership, housing, and infrastructure. Currently the Executive Committee and Governing Board are in the process of evaluating the applications with decisions to be completed by the first week of December.

Outcome 2. Fund a variety of economic development initiatives through a combination of grant and loan programs.

The Rural Development Action Program grant/loan grant program was launched at the same time as the Rural Regional Partnership Program. IRDC received 125 grant/loan applications requesting over \$17.3 million in support. The proposals came from 66 counties and represented a wide range of rural issues in health care, telecommunication, education, housing, infrastructure, and economic development. The Rural Development Administration Advisory Board is in the process of evaluating all of the grants in order to award the \$4.5 million in financial support. Once it concludes that phase of the process, its recommendations will be turned over to the IRDC Governing Board for review. Final decisions on the RDA grant/loan program also will be made by the first week of December.

Outcome 3. Initiate an annual “rural summit” designed to bring rural development groups together to share successful/effective methodologies and approaches.

Under the leadership of Robert White, State Director: USDA-Rural Development, the planning committee for the “Indiana Rural Summit” continues moving forward. The summit has identified the following goals:

- To better understand the broader (national) rural development picture and its impact on rural Indiana communities;
- To better understand the challenges/issues within rural Indiana communities;
- To better understand the resources available within federal and state agencies; and
- To identify interest and opportunities for state/federal agencies to better network, and collaborate on common projects.

Possible summit deliverables might include:

- Formal utilization of the Indiana Rural Forums project as a key communication vehicle linking regional partners for collaborative strategic actions;
- Creation of a state/federal strategic plan directory (web-based);
- Creation of an Indiana Rural Policy Center;
- Support for an Indiana Rural Poll (Quality of Life in Indiana: Trends & Changes); and
- Agreement to conduct the next Indiana Rural Summit either in 2006 or 2007.

The next meeting of the executive planning committee is scheduled for November 16, 2004

Work Plan Component: Value –Added Agricultural Development

***Goal:** To assist Indiana farmers in finding new ways to add value to their commodities, and introduce/promote alternative agricultural processes/enterprises throughout the state.*

Outcome 1. Create the Indiana Cooperative Development Center (ICDC) for the purpose of serving the needs of new and/or existing cooperatives in rural Indiana.

- a) The ICDC project continues to move forward with a variety of initiatives. The advisory board completed and published a document entitled “Indiana Cooperative Development Center: Strategic Plan 2004 – 2005. This report discusses the Center’s Values, Vision, Mission, and Method of Working as well as outlines our strategies and objectives for 2004-2005. In addition, four new organizations have joined the board representing Indiana Farmers Union, Indiana Housing Finance Authority, Multi-Family Housing – USDA Rural Development and the Community Bankers Association of Indiana.
- b) The Center partners also received a \$70,000 grant from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) for work in conducting six regional agri-tourism workshops, participating in the 2005 Indiana Horticultural Congress, providing scholarships for 10 three-member educator/producer teams to participate in the NXLevel SBDC training courses in February 2005 and March 2006. The Center has also activated the Rural Entrepreneurial Network (REN). This network consists of forty-four (44) members representing federal, state, university, and nonprofit organizations offering services to start-up agribusinesses. ICDC members co-developed,

sponsored and hosted a 2 day conference entitled “Engaging Entrepreneurs...A Tactical and Practical Approach”. This was a train the trainer opportunity for 75 invited professionals.

- c) The Center received a second year grant award from USDA-Rural Development to continue the operations of the Center. Finally ICDC completed the process of hiring a Director for the organization. The individual will start on November 15, 2004.

Outcome 2. IRDC will collaborate with Southern Indiana Rural Development Partnership (SIRDP) to provide technical assistance to tobacco stakeholders and tobacco-based communities regarding alternative agricultural products and enterprises.

Work continues on this collaborative project with the Southern Indiana Rural Development Partnership (SIRDP). IRDC’s role is to provide educational materials from the results of the “alternative agricultural enterprises” research currently being conducted by SIRDP. Due to delays in that research, SIRDP has asked for a project extension from the financial sponsor. If approved IRDC’s project will also be re-aligned to meet SIRDP’s new project timeline. IRDC Inc. is currently working with the Purdue University’s Agricultural Economics faculty (via the New Ventures Team) to develop the curriculum/educational materials and with the communication department to publish those educational materials.

Outcome 3. IRDC will collaborate with the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture (OCA), Purdue University and other partners to provide a technical assistance support program for communities developing food-related businesses.

IRDC and its many partners continue to support communities developing food-related businesses. The Madison Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the Indiana Small Development Center continues to provide the local leadership in the development of a regional shared-use commercial kitchen. They also have been successful in securing additional development funds for the building renovations/expansion as well as for the purchase of equipment. Local and regional small food businesses are currently negotiating with the facility in order to utilize their shared -use commercial kitchen. Purdue University has developed, via its food science department, the “Purdue Pilot Plant” technical assistance project which provides full service consumer testing as well as a large scale facility with processing support resources.

Work Plan Component: Community Development

Goal: IRDC will provide technical assistance to rural communities in the areas of community planning and infrastructure development.

Outcome 1. Provide community planning technical assistance to rural communities via the Community Visitation Program (CVP).

Discussions continue with several organizations regarding the collaborative pooling of planning resources for communities. Progress has been slowed however due to some

personnel changes with one of key community development organizations. These discussions will soon be re-engaged due to the recent hiring decisions by the organization.

Outcome 2. Provide technical assistance to rural communities via the Environmental Infrastructure Working Group (EIWG) regarding available resources for water, wastewater, and storm water infrastructure systems.

The EIWG team continues to assist communities. During the last EIWG administrative meeting, discussion was held around an “EIWG” model operating in Ohio. Recommendations were made that IRDC make connection with the Ohio model to determine potential applicability in Indiana.

Outcome 3. Provide technical assistance regarding housing resources to rural communities via the Indiana Housing Assistance Review Team (IHART).

IHART continues to provide technical assistance to communities interested in implementing housing projects. Recently IRDC staff visited an individual investigating the future use of his property for a housing project. Since this community was extremely small (1200), there were no immediate local resources available to him. After the consultation, the individual was provided a decision-making process that would assist him with his development decisions. The team continues to look at partnering with SIRD and others through the housing training project “Live The Dream”.

Outcome 4. Provide technical assistance regarding telecommunication resources to rural communities.

IRDC is a member of a multi-state agency collaboration, the Broadband Working Group, regarding telecommunications in Indiana. On September 13, 2004 this coordinating group sponsored a statewide telecommunication educational conference at Ball State University. Guest speakers included the Lt. Governor Kathy Davis, K. Dane Snowden, Bureau Chief: Consumer & Governmental Affairs for Federal Communications Commission, and Roberta Purcell, Assistant Administrator for Telecommunications Program USDA-Rural Utilities Service among others. The conference was also featured at six regional sites around the state. One of the results of this conference was the request from the Lt. Governor to initiate a statewide strategic planning process that would help the State guide its future telecommunication decisions. The Broadband Work Group immediately began planning for this initiative. On October 15th the first statewide telecommunications focus group meeting was conducted. After reviewing /utilizing the input from this day long process, four regional focus group meetings will be implemented during the fourth quarter. The goal of this focus group work will be to develop an overall plan for creating the state’s strategic planning document.

Work Component: Leadership Development

Goal: IRDC will establish a leadership development incubator to assist rural communities in meeting local leadership development needs. The incubator will be a venue to bring experienced and inexperienced leadership development practitioners

together with the academia, business, and civic sector leaders. The leadership development incubator strategy will be based on the successful business incubator models that pool/share knowledge, expertise, and resources with start-up businesses to enable them to grow and be successful.

Outcome 1. Provide a support network for both established leadership programs and those who are working to develop programs in their respective communities.

IRDC continues to work with its partners in the area of leadership development. The annual conference scheduled for Thursday and Friday, December 9-10, linking community leadership and economic development is entitled Leadership With a Purpose: Building Strong Communities and Growing Local Economies. The conference will utilize the WK Kellogg Foundation's research Leadership in the 21st Century. Research staff Dr. Larrain Matusak and Juana Bordas will provide training sessions around the WK Kellogg work. Stephen Weiler, Assistant Vice President and Economist with the Center for the Study of Rural America at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas will close the two day conference linking leadership and economic development together. In addition to this work, the IRDC Leadership Task Force is continuing to develop the "leadership incubator" concept. The overall goals of the incubator will be to:

- Provide a support network for leadership development efforts in all rural communities, including start-up through experienced efforts;
- Provide resources, expertise and training designed to strengthen existing and emerging program efforts; and
- Create a forum that promotes appropriate practices of leadership development training, programming and knowledge for the enhancement of communities.

Outcome 2. Provide network support for leadership training programs.

Leadership partners are currently involved with either the leadership conference and/or the "Leadership Incubator" project therefore no additional work has been completed on this Outcome since the last report.

Work Plan Component: Outreach Development

Goal: *In the state legislative report, Rural Economic Development Strategy (REDS), practitioners and citizens identified many issues faced by rural communities. The goal of the Outreach Development work plan component is to provide a communication program that will clearly and accurately articulate those challenges as well as the successes achieved by rural communities.*

Outcome 1. Development of communication products that articulates the issues identified in "REDS", as well as celebrates the development successes achieved by IRDC and its partners.

- a) IRDC continues to publish its electronic newsletter as well as continue (through the technical assistance of the Indiana Dept. of Commerce) the re-design of our website. Important links continue to be added to the website.

- b) IRDC staff regularly conducts community information workshops and training sessions around the state. Because of the upcoming elections and changes within the state government structure, the Outreach Committee has decided to table any new printed material until after the first of the year.
- c) The new Indiana Rural Forums project continues to move forward with its partner groups. IRDC and Purdue University are working together to bring all the regional rural partners together to discuss rural issues with a bias for collaborative action. In 2005, there will be five statewide telecasts highlighting rural issues. The first one is targeted for the end of January or the first of February. It will be designed to bring together all of the grant recipients from both the Rural Regional Partnership Program and the Rural Development Action Program. This telecast will launch a “learning community” initiative between and among the grantor and grantees. The additional telecasts will be utilized to highlight other rural issues and to support the Indiana Rural Summit project.

Outcome 2. The resources of IRDC are efficiently and effectively managed in order to maximize impact on Indiana rural communities.

The IRDC Executive Committee and Governing Board have been extremely busy. With the award of funding from the Indiana General Assembly (via “Energize Indiana” legislation), the organization has added a new role, one of a funder. This responsibility has added an exciting new dimension to the Council’s work.